

times that the protections of the Voting Rights Act are no longer appropriate because our “Country has changed.” It is true that our Nation has changed—we have made progress. But there is no question that the scourge of racial discrimination still exists. There are still those within our society intent on suppressing the right to vote and keeping minorities from exercising their constitutional right to participate in our democracy. Since the Shelby County ruling—and now emboldened by the Trump Administration—these forces are more concerning than they have been in decades.

Unfortunately, what has transpired in the aftermath of the Shelby County decision makes the need for the full protections of the Voting Rights Act unmistakably clear. Voter suppression efforts have found renewed life in numerous jurisdictions across the country. Thankfully, in some cases the courts have been able to provide a backstop. Based on strong evidence that hundreds of thousands of minority voters have been disproportionately prevented or discouraged from voting by Republican-enacted voting restrictions, Federal courts have blocked or rolled back many of these laws. Importantly, Federal courts have repeatedly found that these States enacted laws with the intention to discriminate.

Just last month, the Supreme Court left in place the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that blocked North Carolina’s harsh voting restrictions, including a strict photo identification law. The Fourth Circuit concluded that the Republican legislature had passed the law with the intent to racially discriminate against African Americans, and found that “the new provisions target African Americans with almost surgical precision.”

In April of this year, Federal district court ruled for a second time that Texas’s photo ID law was enacted with the intent to racially discriminate and had a racially discriminatory effect on Hispanic and Black voters. This ruling came after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reaffirmed that the Texas law should be struck down because of its discriminatory effect on minority voters. But just weeks ago, the Republican-led Texas legislature and Governor enacted a new law in an attempt to escape the court’s rulings.

Federal courts in Kansas and North Dakota have also acted as a bulwark against attempts by Republican officials to disenfranchise minority voters. In Kansas, courts have issued rulings rejecting repeated attempts by Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach from making voter registration more difficult. In North Dakota, a Federal district court held that the State’s strict photo ID law disproportionately burdened Native Americans and blocked its implementation in the 2016 election.

These decisions are only the tip of the iceberg of what has transpired since Shelby County. While our courts are acting to guard against attempts to

block minorities from accessing the ballot box, each of these cases requires years of litigation, money, and resources. And these are just the voting changes Republicans are enacting at the State level. Many of the efforts at the local level have gone unnoticed but have equally devastating effects on the voting rights of minorities.

The original Voting Rights Act would have prevented many of these discriminatory laws. But the Supreme Court’s decision has taken this country back to an era before the Civil Rights movement—a bad time in our history where some states openly discriminated against minority voters. We are constantly reminded how costly the fight for voting and civil rights has been in this country. Just yesterday, we marked the 53rd anniversary of three civil rights activists who were killed in Mississippi for registering minorities to vote. James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman gave their lives in 1964 when they were murdered while fighting in Mississippi for racial equality and free access to the ballot box. Their example, and the example of generations of civil rights activists who gave their sweat, blood, and sometimes their lives must inspire us and drive us to do more. It is now imperative for us to do everything in our power to correct the Shelby County decision and reinstate the full protections of the Voting Rights Act for the next generation.

The legislation I am introducing today would restore and update the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2017 not only modernizes the Voting Rights Act in response to Shelby County, it also modernizes the law to provide tools to combat current forms of voter discrimination. This bill responds to calls from community leaders and grassroots activists working in communities whose voting rights have been threatened or suppressed. It responds to voting rights experts and civil rights leader who have called for strong legislation to counter the voter intimidation and patently discriminatory efforts that were unleashed after the Shelby County ruling.

I am proud to introduce this bill with forty-six original cosponsors, nearly every single member of the Democratic caucus. I am also proud to be joined by Senator Durbin, who worked with me to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act in 2006. In addition, the House of Representatives is today introducing a companion bill led by Congresswoman Terri Sewell, Congresswoman Judy Chu, Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham, my friend Congressman John Lewis, and over 175 members of the House Democratic caucus.

We are all joining together to introduce this bill today because we will not let systematic and persistent efforts to suppress Americans’ right to vote go unchecked. We will not stand idly by while this country reverts to a bygone era where it was acceptable to dis-

enfranchise our own citizens because they were Black, Hispanic, or disadvantaged. These unconstitutional and discriminatory efforts deserve a strong response.

Protecting Americans’ constitutional right to vote is not a partisan exercise. The original enactment and every reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act has always been bipartisan. When we last reauthorized the Voting Rights Act in 2006, I worked closely with the Republican chairmen of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees—former Senator Arlen Specter and Representative Jim Sensenbrenner. And past reauthorizations of the Voting Rights Act have been signed into law by Republican presidents.

But now, the Republican majority—in both the House and the Senate—refuses to protect the right to vote, restore the Voting Rights Act, or address other critical civil rights issues. Since the Shelby County decision, Republicans at every level of our government have acted to make it harder to vote. This has become the legacy of today’s Republican Party. They should think seriously about reversing course, rather than trying to reverse the gains we have made in history. One significant step would be to join with us to pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore the historic and critically-needed protections of this landmark civil rights law.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 199—DESIGNATING JUNE 2017 AS “GREAT OUTDOORS MONTH”

Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. PETERS, Mr. GARDNER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. HEINRICH, and Ms. HIRONO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the resolution was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. RES. 199

Whereas hundreds of millions of people in the United States participate in outdoor recreation annually;

Whereas Congress enacted the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-249; 130 Stat. 999) to assess and analyze the outdoor recreation economy of the United States and the effects attributable to the outdoor recreation economy on the overall economy of the United States;

Whereas regular outdoor recreation is associated with positive health outcomes and better quality of life;

Whereas outdoor recreation is part of the national heritage of the United States; and

Whereas June 2017 is an appropriate month to designate as “Great Outdoors Month” to provide an opportunity to celebrate the importance of the great outdoors: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates June 2017 as “Great Outdoors Month”; and

(2) encourages all people of the United States to recreate in the great outdoors in June 2017 and year-round.

SENATE RESOLUTION 200—WELCOMING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA ON HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES AND CELEBRATING THE UNITED STATES-REPUBLIC OF KOREA RELATIONSHIP, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. REED, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SCHATZ, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. RISCH, and Mr. PERDUE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 200

Whereas the Government and people of the United States and of the Republic of Korea share a comprehensive alliance, a dynamic partnership, and a personal friendship rooted in the common values of freedom, democracy, and a free market economy;

Whereas the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea is a linchpin of regional stability in Asia, including against the threats posed by the regime in Pyongyang;

Whereas cooperation between our nations spans across the economic, energy, diplomatic, security, and cultural spheres;

Whereas the relationship between the people of the United States and of the Republic of Korea stretches back to Korea's Chosun Dynasty, when the United States and Korea established diplomatic relations under the 1882 Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation;

Whereas the United States-Republic of Korea alliance was forged in blood, with military casualties of the United States during the Korean War of approximately 36,574 deaths and more than 103,284 wounded, and casualties of the Republic of Korea of more than 217,000 soldiers killed, more than 291,000 wounded, and over 1,000,000 civilians killed or missing;

Whereas the Korean War Veterans Recognition Act (Public Law 111-41) was enacted on July 27, 2009, and President Barack Obama issued a proclamation to designate the date as the National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day and called upon the people of the United States to display flags at half-staff in memory of the Korean War veterans;

Whereas the Republic of Korea and the United States have also stood alongside each other in the 4 major wars the United States has fought outside Korea since World War II—in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq;

Whereas, since the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, done at Washington October 1, 1953, and ratified by the Senate on January 26, 1954, United States military personnel have maintained a continuous presence on the Korean Peninsula, and currently there are approximately 28,500 United States troops assigned in the Republic of Korea;

Whereas, in January 2014, the United States and the Republic of Korea agreed upon a new 5-year Special Measures Agree-

ment (referred to in this preamble as “SMA”), establishing the framework for Republic of Korea contributions to offset the costs associated with the stationing of United States Forces Korea (referred to in this preamble as “USFK”) on the Korean Peninsula;

Whereas the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues its dangerous incitements, including political assassinations, conventional military provocations, ballistic missile tests and the advancement of its nuclear programs;

Whereas the United States continues to deploy advanced military capabilities to the land, air and waters of South Korea, including the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (referred to in this preamble as “THAAD”) to defend against the growing threat from the ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and will continue to closely coordinate with the Government of the Republic of Korea when evaluating the full range of necessary defensive military policies;

Whereas the new Government of the Republic of Korea has announced that it has no intention to reverse commitments made in the spirit of the United States-Republic of Korea alliance, while it plans to implement the domestic procedures to uphold democratic, legal, and procedural legitimacy and transparency;

Whereas the People's Republic of China has engaged in an unprecedented campaign of economic pressure on the Republic of Korea in retaliation for the decision by the United States-Republic of Korea alliance to deploy THAAD, with the goal of undermining the United States-Republic of Korea alliance and causing significant damage to the South Korean economy and South Korean people;

Whereas the Government and people of the United States and of the Republic of Korea share a deep commitment to addressing the continued suffering of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea due to the appalling human rights abuses and repression of the regime in Pyongyang;

Whereas, on March 15, 2012, the United States-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement entered into force, which both countries have committed to fully implement;

Whereas the Republic of Korea is the United States sixth-largest trade partner, with United States goods and exports to Korea reaching a level of \$63,800,000,000 in 2016;

Whereas United States foreign direct investment (referred to in this preamble as “FDI”) in Korea (in stock) was \$34,600,000,000 in 2015, a 3.3 percent increase from 2014 and Korea's FDI in the United States (in stock) was \$40,100,000,000 in 2015, up 0.5 percent from 2014;

Whereas, the Republic of Korea spends 2.6 percent of its gross domestic product (referred to in this preamble as “GDP”) on defense and carries a significant portion of United States operating costs for forces in South Korea;

Whereas President Moon Jae-in has expressed his desire to increase this spending to 3 percent of GDP during his tenure;

Whereas the United States, the Republic of Korea, and the Government of Japan have made great strides in promoting trilateral cooperation and defense partnership, including ministerial meetings, information sharing, and cooperation on ballistic missile defense exercises to counter North Korean provocations;

Whereas, on May 7, 2013, the United States and the Republic of Korea signed a Joint Declaration in Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Alliance Between the Republic of Korea and the United States;

Whereas President Moon Jae-in stated during his inaugural address on May 10, 2017: “I will do everything in my power to bring peace to the peninsula”;

Whereas there are deep cultural and personal ties between the people of the United States and of the Republic of Korea, as exemplified by the large flow of visitors and exchanges each year between the 2 countries, including Korean students studying in United States colleges and universities;

Whereas Korean-Americans have made invaluable contributions to the security, prosperity, and diversity of our Nation;

Whereas, from June 28, 2017, through July 1, 2017, President Moon Jae-in will visit Washington for his first official visit to the United States since his election as President; and

Whereas the United States Government looks forward to continuing to deepen our enduring partnership with the Republic of Korea on economic, security, and cultural issues, as well as embracing new opportunities for new partnership and cooperation on emerging regional and global challenges: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) welcomes His Excellency Moon Jae-in, the President of the Republic of Korea, on his first official visit to the United States;

(2) reaffirms the importance of—

(A) the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea, as enshrined in the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953, which is vital to peace and security in Northeast Asia, and the entire Asia-Pacific region; and

(B) the commitment of the United States to defend the Republic of Korea under Article III of the Mutual Defense Treaty;

(3) reinforces longstanding United States commitments to provide extended deterrence, guaranteed by the full spectrum of United States defense capabilities, to the Republic of Korea;

(4) welcomes opportunities to strengthen security consultation, cooperation, and partnership between the United States and the Republic of Korea on matters such as space, cyber, and missile defense;

(5) supports ongoing efforts—

(A) to strengthen the United States-Republic of Korea alliance;

(B) to protect the approximately 28,500 members of the United States Armed Forces stationed on the Korean Peninsula; and

(C) to defend the alliance against any and all provocations committed by the regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea;

(6) urges the United States and the Republic of Korea to work together with members of the United Nations Security Council and other Member States to fully and effectively enforce existing sanctions and consider the need to take immediate action to pass additional and meaningful new measures under Article 41 of the United Nations Charter;

(7) supports efforts by the United States and the Republic of Korea to peacefully achieve a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons through a diplomatic process;

(8) urges the United States and the Republic of Korea to work together to fully and fairly implement all aspects of the United States-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement; and

(9) encourages the United States Government and the Government of the Republic of Korea to continue to broaden and deepen the alliance by enhancing cooperation and building new partnerships in the security, economic, energy, scientific, health, education, and cultural spheres.